

Tourism picks up in Somalia despite insecurity

MOGADISHU: Children run in turquoise water, hawkers tout wares on white sands, and families laugh as tourists disembark from small boats — but it's not some tropical island, it's Somalia's capital, Mogadishu.

"I didn't really tell my family where I was going," said Sheryl, from the United States, after walking along Lido Beach in the city.

"But...from the moment we got off the aeroplane, I've been feeling totally comfortable," she said.

"It's nothing like what you hear." To say that Somalia does not have a good reputation would be an understatement.

It has endured decades of conflict — first a brutal civil war in the 1990s, and now against the Al-Qaeda-linked insurgent group Al-Shabaab — and its capital, Mogadishu, is a byword for bombs and armoured cars.

But the East African country is trying to change that narrative, trumpeting an 86 percent reduction of attacks in the city since 2023 thanks to more surveillance cameras, roadblocks, and plainclothes police. However, incidents do still occur, including a major assault on a prison last month by the militants.

And while Mogadishu is comparatively secure, the rest of the country is not — Al-Shabaab's major territorial gains earlier this year provoked warnings that the capital itself could be at risk.

Still, despite the perils, tourism minister Daud Aweis Jama said that roughly 10,000 people visited last year and the number for 2025 could be twice that — mostly from China, the US, and Turkey.

Sheryl and her husband Richard — both in their fifties — move around the city, accompanied by one armed soldier, they provoked only a passing curiosity.

"We're freely walking around, and people are lovely, as people tend to be, and it's a really interesting place to visit," she said.—AFP

HRW accuses Israel of war crimes in West Bank

WASHINGTON: Israel's expulsion of tens of thousands of Palestinians from three refugee camps in occupied West Bank earlier this year amounts to war crimes and crimes against humanity, Human Rights Watch said on Thursday, calling for urgent international measures to hold Israeli officials accountable and stop further abuses.

The rights group said about 32,000 residents of Jenin, Tulkarm and Nur Shams camps were forcibly displaced by Israeli forces during Operation Iron Wall in January and February. The displaced have been barred from returning, and hundreds of homes were demolished, said the group's 105-page report, "All My Dreams Have Been Erased".

"Ten months after their displacement none of the family residents have been able to go back to their homes," said Melina Ansari, a researcher for Human Rights Watch who worked on the report.

The Geneva Conventions prohibit displacement of civilians from occupied territory, except temporarily for imperative military reasons or their security. HRW said senior officials responsible should be prosecuted for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The report describes soldiers storming homes, ransacking property and ordering families out via loudspeakers mounted on drones. It said residents reported bulldozers razing buildings as they fled and that Israeli forces offered no shelter or aid.

Hisham Abu Tabeek, who was expelled from Jenin, said that his family was not able to take anything when they were expelled.—Reuters



US TOURISTS Richard (second left) and Sheryl (second right) speak with local youth on Lido beach during a guided tour of Mogadishu.—AFP

SA says US to attend G20, but White House denies

JOHANNESBURG: South Africa's president said on Thursday the US had signalled it might change its mind and participate in the Nov 22-23 G20 summit in Johannesburg after a boycott by the Trump administration, but the White House dismissed the report as "fake news".

Cyril Ramaphosa was speaking at a joint news conference with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and European Council President Antonio Costa.

"We have received notice from the United States, a notice which we are still in discussions with them over, about a change of mind, about participating in one shape or form or other in the summit," he said.

"This comes in the days before the summit. And so therefore we need to engage in those types of discussions to see how practical it is and what it finally really means." President Donald Trump's administration had said it will not attend the first G20 summit in Africa, alleging that the host country, previously ruled by its white minority apartheid system until 1994, discriminates against white people.

On Thursday, a White House official said an envoy would attend a ceremony for the official handover of the G20 presidency from South Africa to the US, but there was no question of Washington participating.

"This is fake news. The charge d'affaires in Pretoria will attend the handover ceremony as a formality, but the United States is not joining G20 discussions," they added.

But South African presidential spokesperson Vincent Magwenya said "the president will not hand over to a charge d'affaires".

Ramaphosa said last week of the handover of the G20 presidency to the United States: "I don't want to hand over to an empty chair, but the empty chair will be there."

S. Africa's priorities questioned

The US has clashed with South Africa over various international and domestic policies this year, extending its objections to Pretoria's G20 priorities for the meeting of leading economies being held for the first time in Africa.

"We have received notice from the United States, a notice which we are still in discussions with them over, about a change of mind about participating in one shape, form or other in the summit," Ramaphosa told reporters.

"This comes at the late hour before the summit begins. And so therefore, we do need to engage in those types of discussions to see how practical it is and what it finally really means," he said.

In a note to the government on Saturday, the US embassy repeated that it would not attend the summit, saying South Africa's G20 priorities "run counter to the US policy views and we cannot support consensus on any documents negotiated under your presidency".

In response, Ramaphosa said earlier on Thursday that South Africa would not be bullied.

"It cannot be that a country's geographical location or income or army determines who has a voice and who is spoken down to," Ramaphosa told delegates at a G20 curtain-raiser event.

There "should be no bullying of one nation by another", he said.

Trump has singled out South Africa for harsh treatment on a number of issues since he returned to the White House in January, notably making debunked claims of white Afrikaners being systematically "killed and slaughtered" in the country.

He expelled South Africa's ambassador in March and has imposed 30 per cent trade tariffs, the highest in sub-Saharan Africa.

US businesses were well represented at a separate Business 20 (B20) event that wound up in Johannesburg on Thursday.

The head of the US Chamber of Commerce, Suzanne Clark, thanked South Africa for fostering "real collaboration between G20 nations during a time of rapid change" during its rotating presidency, which transfers to the United States for 2026.

The United States has significant business interests in South Africa with more than 600 US companies operating in the country, according to the South African embassy in Washington.—AFP

Fire breaks out during climate talks in Brazil

BELEM: A fire erupted in a pavilion of the UN's climate talks in Brazil on Thursday, forcing panicked delegates to run for the exits and disrupting tense negotiations among ministers from around the world.

UN and security crews rushed with extinguishers to put out the blaze, which tore a hole in the roof of the COP30 site in Belem as smoke engulfed the corridor and people shouted "fire!" The fire was brought under control and no injuries were reported, Brazilian tourism minister Celso Sabino said. The cause of the blaze was not immediately known.

Firefighters arrived at the scene as smoke billowed inside and out of the conference, which is being held in large tents in the city at the edge of the Amazon, with tens of thousands of people in attendance.

"Firefighters and security teams responded promptly and continue to monitor the site," Brazil's COP30 organizers said in a statement.

The fire started in a country pavilion inside the site's "blue zone" near the entrance of COP30. A light rain caused people outside to cheer.

The fire took place as ministers were deep in negotiations aimed at breaking a deadlock over fossil fuels, climate finance and trade measures, with one day left in the two-week conference. Mauricio Lyrio, the head of the Brazilian delegation, said he was signing an agreement with a third country when he was asked to leave.—AFP

Hundreds flee after volcano erupts in Java

JAKARTA: Hundreds of Indonesians stayed in temporary shelters on Thursday after a volcano on the main island of Java erupted, damaging houses and a school, with around 190 people evacuated from its slopes, authorities said.

Mount Semeru in eastern Java erupted on Wednesday afternoon, throwing ash and gas more than 13 kilometres (eight miles) away and forcing officials to raise the alert status to its highest level.

Volcanic activity had largely calmed down but was still fluctuating on Thursday, according to the Indonesian geological agency.

Nearly 900 people stayed in shelters set up in schools, mosques, and village halls after the eruption, disaster agency official Sultan Syafaat said.

"During the night, they stay (in shelters) probably because they are still traumatised," he said.

Resident Faiz Ramadhani said the eruption had been "very horrible".—AFP

Outcry after general's 'prepared to lose children' warning

PARIS: France's top general on Thursday faced accusations of war-mongering after warning that the country must be ready to "lose its children" against the background of the threat posed by Russia.

The comments by the chief of the defence staff, General Fabien Mandon, in a speech to local mayors on Tuesday have revived a debate over how far France and its European allies should be prepared to go in the conflict.

Russia and Ukraine have been at war since Moscow in February 2022 launched the full-scale invasion of its neighbour.

European powers, including France, have backed Ukraine with increasing supplies of weapons but have always insisted they are not directly involved in the conflict.

"We have all the knowledge, all the economic and demographic strength to deter the Moscow regime from trying its luck by going further," said Mandon.

"What we lack, and this is where you have a major role to play, is the strength of spirit to accept suffering in order to protect who we are," he told the mayors.

Paying tribute to French forces deployed worldwide, he added: "If our country falters because it is not prepared to accept — let's be honest — to lose its children, to suffer economically because defence production will take precedence, then we are at risk," he added.

'Worry the country'

"Yes to national defence, but no to unbearable warmongering rhetoric," responded French Communist Party leader Fabien Roussel.

Louis Aliot, deputy leader of the far-right National Rally, said: "I don't think there are many French people who are ready to go and die for Ukraine."

"It's shocking," said Christian Estrosi, the mayor of Nice and a member of the centre-right Horizons party, which is part of Macron's ruling coalition.

"Is it the role of the chief of staff of the army to worry the country in this way? It's an act of weakness," he told *CNews*.

But Defence Minister Catherine Vautrin said the remarks were "taken out of context for political purposes" and reflected the "military language" of a general who "every day knows that young soldiers risk their lives for the nation".

European Minister Benjamin Haddad added that Mandon had given a "lucid and honest speech on the reality of the threat facing our country".

'Emergency kit'

Mandon had said: "Unfortunately, and I know this from

the information to which I have access, Russia is today preparing for a confrontation by 2030 with our countries." "It is organising for this, preparing for this, and is convinced its existential enemy is NATO and our countries," he added, warning that Russia was "uninhibited in its use of force" and "clearing in a phase of preparing something else".

French officials, including President Emmanuel Macron, have repeatedly warned that Russia is seeking to push further if the invasion of Ukraine succeeds.

Authorities have tried to prepare the minds of the French for a war or crisis that would force them to make sacrifices, but the message is struggling to make inroads among a polarised population that feels far from the frontline and protected by a nuclear deterrent.

Benedicte Cheron, a historian and author of a forthcoming book on military service in France, said the country was scarred by being a "battlefield" in both world wars.

The French have "difficulty accepting the idea of massively committing forces, paying the price — deaths, injuries, economic cost — for anything other than protecting the territory from an invasion." The French government, on Thursday, meanwhile, published a guide entitled "Everyone Responsible", which says it provides "tools to help you prepare to face a major crisis" such as an external "aggression" or natural catastrophe. It advised the French to prepare an "emergency kit" in a bag — to be checked twice a year — containing essentials like food, water, and medicine as well as a battery-powered radio and games.

"Our society must adapt to become stronger," it said.—AFP

Giant spider web found in cave

ATHENS: Scientists have discovered a giant spider web spanning about half the size of a tennis court and with some 111,000 spiders in a cave on the border between Greece and Albania.

The web in the "Sulfur Cave" in the Vromoner Gorge covers some 106 square metres (1,140 square feet), according to the study in the publication *Subterranean Biology*.

In it are some 69,000 domestic house spiders (Tegenaria domestica), in addition to over 42,000 of Prinerigone vagans dwarf weavers (Linyphiidae), the study said.

The researchers from universities and natural history museums in Germany and Italy called the discovery "the first documented case of colonial web formation" of two species that are solitary.—AFP

Airspace ban for Indian aircraft

Continued from Page 1

announced a series of measures, including the closure of its airspace to all India-owned or Indian-operated airlines.

It may be noted that due to the financial toll of a ban on Indian carriers flying over Pakistan, Air India is lobbying the Indian government to convince China to let it use a sensitive military airspace zone in Xinjiang to shorten routes.

For Air India, the country's only carrier with a major international network, fuel costs have risen by as much as 29 per cent and journey times by up to three hours on some long-haul routes, Reuters reported, citing a document submitted to Indian officials in late October.

The airline, owned by Tata Group and Singapore Airlines, estimated the Pakistan airspace closure's impact on its profit before tax at \$455 million annually — a significant amount given its fiscal 2024-25 loss stood at \$439m.

Bangladesh police hope new uniform repairs broken image

DHAKA: Bangladesh's police have unveiled new uniforms in a symbolic bid to signal reform and rebuild deeply eroded public trust, just weeks ahead of the first elections since a mass uprising.

The police force was cast into turmoil after the 2024 overthrow of the autocratic government of now-convicted fugitive Sheikh Hasina, which left at least 1,400 dead and thousands maimed — many by police gunfire.

"Bangladesh Police have been facing an unprecedented crisis," police spokesman Sahadat Hossaine said. "The police-makers suggested... that a new uniform may bring a positive change." Police are now trading the familiar turquoise-and-blue uniforms for iron-grey shirts and chocolate-brown trousers.

Whether a new colour scheme can mend a shattered reputation remains doubtful.

"Whenever I see a policeman, I feel like biting his flesh off. I don't know if I'll ever get over this hatred," said Nazma Akhtar, 48, whose 17-year-old son Golam Nafeez was killed during the uprising.

Akhtar's son was shot, denied entry to a hospital, and died from blood loss on August 4, 2024.

"How can a new uniform change their attitude?" Akhtar added. "I saw them beating teachers just for demanding a pay rise." The nation of 170 million people is expected to hold elections in February 2026, with the security forces critical to ensuring they are peaceful.

Former prime minister Sheikh Hasina was sentenced to death by a Dhaka court on Monday, for charges

that included ordering the security forces to use deadly force against protesters.

Hasina's bid to cling to power failed after she ordered the army to crush the protests, and they refused.

Vandalism and arson attacks in the chaotic aftermath of her fall targeted roughly 450 of the country's 600 police stations, according to officials.

"They left the police stations immediately after the previous government stepped down, and now they are struggling to get back on their feet", Hossaine said.

Researchers have documented widespread brutality by police during the uprising.

That included the killing of unarmed teenage student Ashiqur Rahman Hridoy, who was "sandwiched between two groups of police and shot from point-blank range," Fawzia Afroz of Tech Global Institute policy group said.

Around 1,500 police personnel now face criminal charges, mostly for murder, with dozens in detention. The former police chief, who pleaded guilty in the same trial as Hasina, was sentenced to five years.

Police say an estimated 55 senior officers, also wanted for murder, have fled to India.

But serving officers express their own frustrations: 44 officers were also killed during the unrest, yet the interim government has granted "legal immunity" to protesters. Sultana Razia watched as her husband, a police inspector, was beaten to death by a mob in the chaos after Hasina fled.—AFP

AND SO THE INTELLIGENT CONVERSATION BEGINS...

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THIS SUNDAY'S HIGHLIGHTS:

EOS

PERSPECTIVES ON EMPIRE. CULTURE. IDEAS.

COVER: CHAI AND THE CITY

A *chai dhabaywala* who listens to the stories his customers can't say out loud. This year's Zeenat Haroon Rashid Writing Prize for Women was for short fiction and was judged by a panel that included novelists Uzma Aslam Khan and Omar Shahid Hamid, as well as publisher Ailish Ahmed. As in past years, *Eos* is exclusively publishing the winning entry by **Sidra Nisar**, which the judges agreed was "powerful, immersive and utterly charming"

REGION: HASINA'S HARSH RECKONING

Does the death sentence for ousted Bangladesh prime minister Sheikh Hasina signal that no leader is above the law or political vengeance? And what does it mean for stability in the country?

TRIBUTE: EXPLAINING BANGLADESH

Bangladeshi intellectual Badruddin Umar, who passed away in September, was often dubbed a leftist theorist. But his real legacy is scholarly: one that gives international readers an empirically grounded view of the country's contested past

BOOKS&AUTHORS: Ghazi Salahuddin's *Jeena Wada Khilafi Hai*, Fatima Ijaz and Tahira Kehar's *Story Circle: Letters on Creativity & Friendship*, and Booker Prize-Winner David Szalay's *Flesh*; ALSO: Claire Chambers on Ralph Russell's *Focus*

PLUS: Nadeem F. Paracha on Fear and Loathing Across Party Lines, Durriya Kazi on Seafaring, Pakistan Cricket and Its Pitches, A Postcard from Nazimuddin, The Arjumand Painting Awards 2025, Shazia Hasan on the *Purdah Moti Biryani*, Dr Khwaja Ali Shahid's Gardening, Auntie Agni and Static Cling

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SPOTLIGHT: NEELOFAR

The film about an unusual romance between a visually impaired woman and a celebrity poet, set to be released in cinemas on November 28, is a far cry from Fawad Khan and Mahira Khan's previous projects together. And it promises to have audiences seeing them in a completely different light

SOUNDSCAPE: THE SPOTIFY EXODUS

Many musicians are leaving the streaming platform — for ideological and financial reasons. What does this mean for the music you love?

PLUS: Reviews of Dan Trachtenberg's *Predator: Badlands* and Nicholas Hytner's *The Choral*, Netflix's *Baba* and the Price of Addiction, What Makes *Shera* a Binge Watch, Can Nuclear War Be Imminent?, The Grapevine, Binge and Spotify's Top Pakistani Music